

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

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SUBJECT: DIALOGUE 74

REF: ABIDJAN 307

1. AS POST REPORTED REFTEL, THE COUNTRY'S OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN MEETING ALL WEEK TO GIVE A HARD LOOK AT THE COUNTRY'S DOMESTIC SITUATION. PARTICIPANTS WITH WHOM WE HAVE SPOKEN HAVE EXPRESSED SATISFACTION AT THE MEETINGS, WHICH HAVE BEEN DUBBED DIALOGUE 74. NEEDLESS TO SAY, GOVERNMENT DECISION-MAKING HAS COME TO A VIRTUAL HALT DURING THIS PERIOD.

2. FIRST GROUP TO EXPRESS ITS VIEWS, THE PREFETS AND SOUS-PREFETS, STARTED OFF TIMIDLY, REQUIRING SOME PRODDING FROM HOUPHOUET TO URGE THEM TO SAY WHAT IS REALLY ON THEIR MINDS. THINGS SEEMED TO PICK UP AFTER THAT, AS OTHER PREFETS TOOK THE FLOOR AND SPOKE. NEXT CAME THE SERVICE CHIEFS, FOLLOWED BY THE INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR ADMINISTRATIVE AFFAIRS AND THE LOCAL PARTY SECRETARIES-GENERAL. THE SESSION OF JANUARY 17 WAS THE LAST BEFORE A LONG WEEKEND, DURING WHICH THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE VARIOUS GROUPS, MEETING TOGETHER WITH BUREAU POLITIQUE MEMBERS HEADED BY JUSTICE MINISTER AND HOUPHOUET CONFIDANT ALLIALI, WILL DRAFT RESOLUTIONS TO BE PRESENTED AT THE PLENARY. FINALLY, THE BUREAU POLITIQUE

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AND CABINET WILL MEET WITH HOUPHOUET ON THE MORNING OF JANUARY 21,

PRESUMABLY TO EXAMINE THE RESOLUTIONS AND DECIDE ON SOME FOLLOW-UP ACTION, PRIOR TO THE FULL MEETING OF OFFICIALS THAT AFTERNOON TO ADOPT RESOLUTIONS.

3. AMONG GENERAL CRITICISMS EMERGING FROM THE DISCUSSIONS ARE THE FAILURE TO DELEGATE RESPONSIBILITY AND THE AUTOCRATIC ATTITUDES ON THE PART OF SOME OF THOSE GUARDINGIT, EXCESSIVE PAPERWORK AND OUTMODED PROCEDURES WHICH LEAD TO SLOWNESS IN DECISION-MAKING, CORRUPTION OF OFFICIALS, ABSENTEEISM, AND THE RUNNING OF THE STATE CORPORATIONS. THE SECRETARIES-GENERAL CALLED, UNDERSTANDABLY, FOR AN ENHANCEMENT OF THEIR POSITION VIS-A-VIS LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.

4. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES HOUPHOUET HAS ALSO USED THIS WEEK TO GET ACROSS THE MESSAGE THAT 1974 IS A YEAR THAT WILL REQUIRE CONSIDERABLE BELT-TIGHTENING IN VIEW OF IMPORTANT PRICE INCREASES IN KEY ITEMS LIKE GASOLINE AND FERTILIZER.

5. ALTHOUGH WE MUST WAIT FOR THE RESULTS, THIS WEEK OF CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF DOMESTIC PROBLEMS APPEARS TO BE WELL LAUNCHED. CRITICISMS ARE TO THE POINT AND VALID. THE GOVERNMENT HAS PROMISED THERE WILL BE RAPID FOLLOW-UP, AND THERE ARE EVEN RUMORS THAT THIS MAY ENTAIL CHANGES OF SOME HIGH OFFICIALS. HOUPHOUET HAS SUCCEEDED IN CAPTURING A MOOD FOR IMPROVEMENT IN THE GOVERNMENT, PREVALENT ESPECIALLY AMONG YOUNGER CADRE. THE PROBLEM NOW IS THAT THEY WILL EXPECT RESULTS AND WILL BE KEEPING A SHARP EYE OUT TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS. IF THIS IS NOTHING BUT A SHORT-LIVED FAD, THERE WILL BE CONSIDERABLE DISAPPOINTMENT AND FRUSTRATION.
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